

What is claimed is:

1. A lancing device comprising:
a drive mechanism comprising a drive spring and a carrier driven by the drive spring; and
a lancet that is decoupled from the drive mechanism and slidably floats relative to the carrier during at least a portion of a lancing stroke.
2. The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein the carrier engages and drives the lancet through a first portion of the lancing stroke, and wherein the lancet is inertially propelled through a second portion of the lancing stroke after the carrier is stopped.
3. The lancing device of Claim 1, wherein the lancing stroke includes the lancet moving from a retracted position to an extended position, wherein the drive mechanism is decoupled from the lancet when the lancet is in the extended position.
4. The lancing device of Claim 3, further comprising a carrier stop member that limits the travel of the carrier before the lancet reaches the extended position.
5. The lancing device of Claim 4, wherein the carrier stop does not limit the travel of the lancet, wherein, after the carrier is stopped by the carrier stop, the lancet decouples from the carrier and slidably floats relative to the carrier as it continues moving toward the extended position.
6. The lancing device of Claim 4, further comprising a lancet stop member that limits the travel of the lancet in the extended position, the lancet stop being a separate structure from the carrier stop.

7. The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising a sled that receives or includes the lancet and that is slidably received in the carrier.
8. The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising a housing defining an axial chamber, wherein the carrier comprises:
 - a carriage slidably received in the housing chamber, the carriage defining a bore that slidably receives the lancet; and
 - one or more wings extending outwardly of the housing, wherein the lancing device is armed by retracting the wings to a cocked position with the carrier in a retracted position.
9. The lancing device of Claim 8, further comprising one or more struts extending between the carriage and the wings, and projecting through one or more slots in the housing, wherein, after the lancing device is fired but before the lancet reaches an extended position, the carrier is stopped by the carrier struts engaging one or more stop surfaces defined by the housing slots.
10. The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising a cocking mechanism comprising at least one cocking arm extending from the drive mechanism, and an engagement surface for retaining the cocking arm in a cocked position with the carrier in a retracted position.
11. The lancing device of Claim 10, further comprising a trigger mechanism including a release button with a catch release member that, when the release button is moved, engages the cocking arm and releases the carrier to move to an extended position.
12. The lancing device of Claim 1, further comprising an endcap with at least a portion that rotates to adjust a penetration depth of the lancet.

13. A method of lancing the skin of a subject to obtain a sample of body fluid; the method comprising:

driving a lancet through a first portion of a lancing stroke by engagement with a carrier and drive mechanism;

stopping the motion of the carrier; and

allowing the lancet to continue through a second portion of the lancing stroke after the carrier is stopped.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the step of stopping the motion of the carrier comprises impacting the carrier, but not the lancet, against a carrier stop surface before the lancet reaches an extended position.

15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising stopping the lancet in an extended position by impacting the lancet against a lancet stop surface that is separate from the carrier stop surface.

16. The method of Claim 13, wherein the step of allowing the lancet to continue comprises stopping the lancet after the carrier is stopped.

17. The method of Claim 13, further comprising providing a lancing device comprising the lancet and the carrier.

18. The method of Claim 17, further comprising providing a sled that receives or includes the lancet and that is slidably received in the carrier.

19. A lancing device comprising:

a housing defining an axial chamber;

a lancet moveable between a retracted position and an extended position; and

a carrier comprising a carriage slidably received in the housing chamber, the carriage defining a bore that slidably receives the lancet, one or more wings extending outwardly of the housing, and one or more struts extending between the carriage and the wings, and projecting through one or more slots in the housing,

wherein the lancing device is armed by retracting the wings to a cocked position with the carrier in the retracted position and, after the lancing device is fired, the carrier is stopped by the carrier struts engaging one or more stop surfaces defined by the housing slots.

20. The lancing device of Claim 19, further comprising a cocking mechanism including at least one cocking arm extending from the drive mechanism and defining a catch surface, and an engagement surface defined by the housing for retaining the catch surface with the carrier in the retracted position, and further comprising a trigger mechanism including a release button with a catch release member that, when the release button is moved, engages the catch surface of the cocking arm and releases the carrier to move to the extended position.

21. A lancing device comprising:

a housing;

a lancet defining at least one contact surface;

a drive mechanism including a drive member that engages and drives the lancet;

and

an endcap that rotates relative to the housing and that has a plurality of stop surfaces that are selectively aligned with and engaged by the lancet contact surface to limit forward lancet movement.

22. The lancing device of Claim 21, wherein the drive member comprises a carriage that receives the lancet and that has a flared proximal section defining a flared bore that receives the endcap stop surfaces not aligned with and engaged by the lancet body engagement surface.